

## Contrastive fragments in Thai: against the in-situ approach

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**1. Introduction:** One theoretical question concerning clausal ellipsis is whether remnants move out of the ellipsis site, or remain in situ and their surroundings are elided. This talk provides novel evidence involving contrastive fragments (CFs) in Thai (a rigid SVO, *wh*-in-situ language) that favors the *movement-plus-ellipsis* view of clausal ellipsis see Merchant 2004. I show that **(i)** CFs are derived from focus fronting and deletion and **(ii)** constraints on fragments closely track those on overt A'-movement to FocP. This view is empirically superior to competing in-situ analyses cf. Abe 2016, Ott & Struckmeier 2018 and cleft source analyses.

Properties	CF	Ex situ	In situ	Clefting
Island effects	√	√	*	√
Aspect markers	*	*	√	*
Negative Polarity Items (NPIs)	*	*	√	*
Obligatory presence of copula	*	*	*	√
PPs and adjuncts	√	√	√	*
Quantified NPs	√	√	√	*

**2. Contrastive Fragments:** Thai allows both embedded sluicing (Manowang 2024) and fragments. CFs are clausal ellipsis in which everything, except the focused phrase and the contrastive focus marker, goes missing (1b).

1) a. *khǎw khít wâ: dèk mâj kin màmûaj* b. *khǎw khít wâ: { thù?rian tà:nhà:k | thù?rian }*  
 he think that child NEG eat mango he think that durian FOC

‘He thought the child didn’t eat the mango’ ‘He thought it’s the durian <the child didn’t eat>’

Both ex- and in-situ focus and CFs obligatorily employ the focus marker *tà:nhà:k* or pitch accent (indicated by italics). The following arguments rule out in-situ structures and clefts as the (sole) source of fragment and are compatible with focus fronting as its sole source.

**3.1 Island effects:** The fact that CFs (2b), ex-situ focus (2c), and clefts (2d) but not in-situ focus (2e) are sensitive to islands indicates that in-situ focus does not feed CFs.

2) *khǎw khít wâ: a. raw rú:càk khon thî: phû:t thaj b. \*/?jî:pùn tà:nhà:k*  
 he think that we know man REL speak Thai Japanese FOC

‘He thinks...’ ‘we know the man who speaks Thai’

c. *\*jî:pùn tà:nhà:k raw rú:càk khon thî: phû:t d. \*jî:pùn thî: raw rú:càk khon thî: phû:t*  
 Japanese FOC we know man REL speak Japanese REL we know man REL speak

e. *raw rú:càk khon thî: phû:t jî:pùn tà:nhà:k*

we know man REL speak Japanese FOC (b-e): ‘we know the man who speaks **Japanese**’

**3.2 Unmovable aspect markers:** The post-verbal aspect markers are never clefted (3c), focus fronted (3d), nor do they occur as CFs (3b). They can be nevertheless focalized in in-situ (3e), which suggests that focus fronting rather than in-situ focus feeds CFs.

3) *khǎw bò:k wâ: a. khǎw kin jù: b. \*lè:w tà:nhà:k c. \*lè:w thî: khǎw kin*  
 he tell that he eat IMPF PERF FOC PERF REL he eat

‘He said...’ ‘he was eating.’

d. *\*lè:w tà:nhà:k khǎw kin e. khǎw kin lè:w tà:nhà:k*  
 PERF FOC he eat he eat PERF FOC

(b-e): ‘he **already** ate.’

**3.3 NPIs:** Indeterminate pronouns have an NPI-reading in-situ (4a), which is lost in clefts (4b), focus fronting (4c), and CFs (4d). This suggests that there is no in-situ source of CFs.

4) *khǎw khít wâ: a. dèk mâj kin ?à?raj tà:nhà:k b. ?à?raj thî: dèk mâj kin*  
 he think that child NEG eat what FOC what REL child NEG eat

‘He thought...’ ‘the child didn’t eat anything’ ‘what it was that the child didn’t eat’

c. *\*?à?raj tà:nhà:k dèk mâj kin d. \*?à?raj tà:nhà:k*

what FOC child NEG eat what FOC (c-d): ‘the child didn’t eat anything.’

**3.4 Obligatory presence of copula:** while embedded clefts require an overt specificational copula *khuu:* (5a), CFs, ex- and in-situ focus do not allow for the presence of a copula (5b-d):

- 5) *khǎw khít wâ:* a. *\*(khuu:) thù?rian thî: dèk mâj kin* b. *\*(khuu:) thù?rian tà:nhà:k*  
 he think that COP durian REL child NEG eat COP durian FOC  
 ‘He thought...’ ‘it’s the durian that the child didn’t eat’ ‘it’s the durian’  
 c. *\*(khuu:) thù?rian tà:nhà:k dèk mâj kin* d. *\*(khuu:) dèk mâj kin thù?rian tà:nhà:k*  
 COP durian FOC child NEG eat COP child NEG eat durian FOC  
 ‘the child didn’t eat **the durian**’ ‘the child didn’t eat **the durian**’

**3.5 PPs and adjuncts:** PPs and manner adverbs are legitimate as CFs (6b), and they can be focalized in ex- and in-situ focus (6c-d). However, they cannot occur as cleft pivots (6e).

- 6) *khǎw khít wâ:* a. *khǎw khuj kàp khru jà:ŋkâ:wráw* b. *{kàp pha:nro:ŋ | jà:ŋsuphâ:p} tà:nhà:k*  
 he think that he speak to teacher aggressively to janitor politely FOC  
 ‘He thought...’ ‘he spoke to the teacher aggressively’ ‘it was to the janitor | politely’  
 c. *{kàp phanrong tà:nhà:k khǎw khuj jà:ŋkâ:wráw | jà:ŋsuphâ:p tà:nhà:k khǎw khuj kàp khru}*  
 to janitor FOC he speak aggressively politely FOC he speak to teacher  
 d. *{khǎw khuj kàp phanrong jà:ŋkâ:wráw tà:nhà:k | khǎw khuj kàp khru: jà:ŋsuphâ:p tà:nhà:k}*  
 he speak to janitor aggressively FOC he speak to teacher politely FOC  
 e. *{\*kàp phanrong thî: khǎw khuj jà:ŋkâ:wráw | \*jà:ŋsuphâ:p thî: khǎw khuj kàp khru:}*  
 to janitor REL 3SG speak aggressively politely REL he speak to teacher  
 (c-e): ‘he spoke **to the janitor** aggressively | he spoke to the teacher **politely**’

**3.6 Quantified NPs:** The NPs modified by quantifiers/numeral-classifiers can occur as CFs (7b) and be focalized in ex- and in-situ focus (7c-d), but they cannot be clefted (7e). This restriction strongly suggests that clefting cannot be a source of CFs.

- 7) *khǎw khít wâ:* a. *raw ?à:n naŋsũ:-să.m-lêm* b. *bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rũŋ tà:nhà:k*  
 he think that we read book-three-CL article-five-CL FOC  
 ‘He thought...’ ‘we read three books’ ‘it’s **five articles**’  
 c. *bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rũŋ tà:nhà:k raw ?à:n* d. *raw ?à:n bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rũŋ tà:nhà:k*  
 article-five-CL FOC we read we read article-five-CL FOC  
 ‘we read **five articles**’ ‘we read **five articles**’  
 e. *\*khuu: bòtkhwuam-hâ:-rũŋ thî: raw ?à:n*  
 COP article-five-CL REL we read ‘it’s five articles that we read’

**4. Blocking CFs:** CFs cannot be licensed when ex-situ focus is blocked. Relativization is created via a long-distance dependency between the *thî:-*relative operator at C<sup>0</sup> and the gap cf. Jenks 2014, but relative clauses are incompatible with ex-situ focus and CFs, as in (8):

- 8) a. *khǎw ?à:n bòtkhwuam thî: pesetsky khïen tà:nhà:k*  
 he read article REL Pesetsky write FOC  
 b. *\*khǎw ?à:n [NP bòtkhwuam<sub>j</sub> [CP thî: [FocP pesetsky<sub>i</sub> [Foc' tà:nhà:k ([TP t<sub>i</sub> khïen t<sub>j</sub> )]]]]]*  
 he read article REL Pesetsky FOC write  
 (a-b): ‘He read the article that **Pesetsky** wrote.’

**5. Discussion and implications:** Apparently, Thai contrastive fragments are compatible with focus fronting. In this view, A'-movement of contrastive foci is driven by the strong [F]-(ocus) feature on Foc<sup>0</sup>, which may also host the [E]-feature responsible for ellipsis (see Manowang 2024 for sluicing). When the focused (*wh-*)phrases move to Spec, FocP, they enter into feature-checking relation with Foc<sup>0</sup> (Lobeck 1995, Merchant 2001, also Aelbrecht 2010), and [E], if present, carries the instruction to delete a constituent (Foc<sup>0</sup> in the case of sluicing). The proposed analysis constitutes additional support of the WH/Sluicing correlation proposed by van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2006, 2013. If focus fronting is attested in a certain language, it is a primary structure that feeds clausal ellipsis in that language. It appears necessary to say that sometimes the complement of Foc<sup>0</sup> and sometimes Foc<sup>0</sup> is elided cf. Merchant 2001, Temmerman 2013, Landau 2020, also Thoms 2010, a difference will be discussed in the talk.

**Selected references:** Abe 2016. Make short answers shorter. Aelbrecht 2010. *The syntactic licensing of ellipsis*. Landau 2020. A scope argument against T-to-C movement in sluicing. Manowang 2024. Sluicing and focus in Thai. Merchant 2001. *The syntax of silence*. Merchant 2004. Fragments and ellipsis. Ott & Struckmeier 2018. Particles and deletion. Temmerman 2013. The syntax of Dutch embedded fragment answers. Thoms 2010. Verb floating and VP-ellipsis: towards a movement account of ellipsis licensing. van Craenenbroeck & Lipták 2006. Relative deletion in Hungarian.